1: Child: M-S (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

175 439 314 of price fluctuations and sought by every means to maintain the former level of returns. The European traders aided and abetted this process in order to bolster up their credit, for from 1887, when the boom began, most of them were operating on shoe-strings. The result was almost immediate. Benguela rubber was classified as 'third-class' at a price one-fourth the former rate.[1] This was the end of the rubber trade. With the establishment of plantations in the East Indies, in South America, and on the African west coast, which produced a uniformly high quality, the native-produced wild rubber of Angola ceased to have any quotation whatever.[2]

Export statistics show that the totals in quantity and value of rubber exported were nearly as large in 1916 as in 1888, and that in 1918 and 1919 they fell to almost nothing,[3] but for the Ovimbundu the rubber trade ended in 1911—'the year of the great hunger in the Ngangela country'. They remember that many caravans which went out at the beginning of that year's dry season never did return, or that only a few of their stronger members returned—mere skeletons and shadows. *Ngandi*[4] tried to eat wax and died; *Ngandi* killed and ate his younger brother, saying, 'It is better that one of us should live to return, rather than both die.' The caravans usually carried actual rations for only a few days of the outward journey (to last through the 'Hungry Country'), and relied on buying the food needed for the rest of the time. This experience put an end to a trade which was already passing out of the hands of the Ovimbundu—owing to the multiplication of European trading establishments, not only throughout the Umbundu country but even in the 'Ngangela' regions, and the building of the Benguela Railway, which finally put an end to porterage and the trading caravans of former days.[5]

[731] [484]

[1] A. Bastos, op. cit., pp. 40 ff.

[2] In 1942, after the capture of Malaya and the Dutch East Indies by the Japanese and the consequent acute shortage of rubber, the gathering of wild rubber in eastern Angola was resumed, most of the product going to Britain. Some, however, has gone to the national factories at Luanda and in Portugal, and consequently there is a stimulus to maintain the production of wild rubber in the colony, but unless more humane methods are used with the native producers the present limited supply is bound to fall off.

[3] Statistics of export and import are given by F. Tranzoso, op. cit. The figures for rubber from 1888 to 1919 are on p. 38.

[4] *Ngandi*, the Umbundu equivalent for 'John Doe' or 'So-and-so'.

[5] The Benguela Railway (*Caminho de Ferro de Benguela*) began construction in 1904; in 1910 it reached Cuma (198 miles) in Ciyaka, well up on the Plateau